

**Illinois History**  
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## **The Todd Family Divided**

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In the years of the Civil War many families found themselves divided between the Union and the Confederate states. Brother fought brother in this time of national crisis. These divides affected the lives of people all the way up to the White House. Mary Todd Lincoln found that many of her siblings became her enemies as the war progressed. Of her eleven siblings, including half siblings, seven either joined the Confederate army or married men loyal to the South. Of these siblings, her youngest half sister Emilie Helm was the hardest on Mary. The loss of Emilie to the Confederates turned out to have a great effect on both Mary and her husband.

Before the war began Emilie and her husband were close friends of the Lincolns. Mary had always been close to her sister and, during their time in Springfield, Lincoln became good friends with her husband, Ben Helms. The two discussed the politics of the time. Ben was a West Point graduate who had his roots in Kentucky. By the time the Lincolns left for the White House in 1861 the President called Emilie his “Little Sister.” During this time Mary looked forward to the time she thought she and Emilie would spend together at the White House, but these dreams were shattered with the beginning of the war.

At the start of the war Lincoln was afraid that Helm would join with his southern friends. To try and keep him in the North, for both his military knowledge and for fear of the reaction that Mary would have if Emilie left for the South, Lincoln offered to make him the paymaster in the Union army and bestow upon him the rank of major. Though

Helm did consider the position, he decided in the end to stay loyal to his old southern friends; however, he did consider the decision to be one of the most painful in his life. Ben became a brigadier general and the two temporarily faded out of the Lincolns' lives. This changed two years later when Ben was mortally wounded in the Battle of Chickamauga in September of 1863. A letter to President Lincoln from Emilie's stepmother brought the sisters back together.

The letter asked if Emilie could cross Union lines to attend her husband's funeral. Lincoln of course gave permission, but when Emilie reached the line they tried to make her pledge allegiance to the Union army. She refused, finding the act treasonous to her dead husband. After hearing of the problem, Lincoln wrote to have Emilie sent to the White House. Emilie Helm arrived in November of 1863 pregnant and accompanied by her daughter. She was dressed entirely in black, the garb of a mourning widow, but she was generally happy to see her sister. The first few weeks of the sisters' reunion were filled with happiness as they caught up with one another, but soon their political differences came between them. It was hard for Emilie to be comfortable in a Union setting when it was the Union men who killed her beloved husband.

At first the Lincolns tried to avoid having her at banquets. In many ways they were embarrassed that they had a Confederate loyalist in the White House and they were afraid of what she would do if she met any of the officers who frequented the gatherings. Their fears were soon recognized when the Lincolns were hosting two Union generals, one of which was Daniel E. Sickles. The General was surprised to find a Confederate in the home of the President. After commenting on the matter he received a reply from Emilie stating, "If I had twenty sons, they would all be fighting yours." Outbursts like

these eventually forced Lincoln to send Emilie back to Kentucky without a loyalty pledge in order to end the humiliation caused by her political views.

Even once she was home she did not leave the Lincolns alone. She sent a second letter to Lincoln asking if she could again cross Union lines to sell cotton to get money for her family. She figured she could use her family ties to the political power to get ahead in the cotton market. When Lincoln received the letter he replied that he would not give her a pass since she was a Confederate and would not give her loyalty to the Union cause. Though this was, of course, the logical answer that he would have supplied to anyone asking with a similar request, Emilie became very angry and made sure that Lincoln knew it in her reply which blamed him for the death of her siblings and her husband. After reading this hateful letter directed at her husband, Mary was enraged and the two sisters never spoke to one another again.

The war had stretched what had once been a very close relationship to its breaking point. The two women ended up with two opposing views, which could not be mixed. Through these trying times Lincoln was continually afraid of what would happen if the two women broke ties with one another. He was worried that this would cause Mary to sink deeper into her depression, but the separation did not have the effect on her psychological problems that he had expected. Instead it pulled her tighter into the Union. Previously she had not truly believed in freedom for the black slaves. She had grown up in the South and still held the southern prejudices that black people were inferior. She was even known to apologize to Emilie for that part of the Union quest. Following her encounters with her less than grateful sister, Mary found herself believing more fully in the entirety of the Union goals. While arguing over politics with her sister, she

discovered what her husband was fighting for and began to fully back his war. Mary never seemed to look back on the frayed relationship. She saw Emilie as a traitor and that was that. She lost all respect and sympathy for her sister when she would not join the Union fight. She was even quoted as saying in relation to her siblings, “Why should I sympathize with the Rebels? They would hang my husband tomorrow if it was in their power.” [From Jean Baker, *Mary Todd Lincoln*; Jerrold Packard, *Lincolns in the White House*; Ruth Randall, *Mary Todd Lincoln*; William Davis, Brian Pohanka, and Don Troiani, eds., *Civil War Journal*.]

## **Mary Todd Lincoln**

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On December 13, 1818, Robert Smith Todd and Eliza gave birth to a daughter, Mary Ann. She was the fourth of seven children. The Todds lived in the South and owned a few slaves. Mary Ann's father was a lawyer, merchant, military officer (War of 1812), and a member of the Kentucky legislature. Mary Ann's mother, Eliza Parker, died while Mary was still young. Mary Ann's father, Robert Smith later remarried Elizabeth Humphrey.

When Mary Ann turned eight, she began attending Shelby Female Academy, later known as the Academy of Dr. John Ward. At the age of fourteen, she was sent to Madame Victorie Mentelle's Select Academy for Young Ladies. Later, Mary Ann moved to Springfield, Illinois, to live with her sister Frances. After three months, Mary came back to Shelby Female Academy for two more years.

Even though Mary Ann came from a wealthy background and was a very proper lady, she knew she was different from other girls and was destined for something more than a common housewife. She wanted a man in her life. She once said, "I would rather marry a poor man – man of mind – with hope and brightness, prospects ahead for a position, fame and power than to marry all the houses [of] gold." As an old adage goes "opposites attract." At a dance, in 1839, Abraham Lincoln walked into Mary Todd's life. It was love at first sight. It did not take long for Lincoln to propose. Mary Todd was a proper wealthy lady, while on the other hand, Lincoln was not a well-educated man nor was he wealthy. However, that did not seem to make a difference. Lincoln and Mary

married on November 4, 1842. Soon after they married, Mary gave birth to four sons, Robert, Edward, William, and Thomas. During his toddler years, Edward died of diphtheria. A year after Edward's death, Abraham's father, Thomas, died of a kidney ailment.

While Lincoln served as a Congressman for two years, Mary stayed at home to care for the family, clean, and cook. When Abraham began looking for a position in Congress, Mary wrote solicitation letters to Whig leaders.

Mary believed that one day she would be the wife of the President of the United States of America. Soon Abraham was elected president. On March 6, 1860, Abraham Lincoln was officially inaugurated.

The Lincolns moved into the White House after Lincoln was inaugurated. Living in Washington, D. C. was a hardship for Mary. When the South succeeded from the Union, Mary was criticized for holding costly festive events, which caused her to go over the budget set by Congress for the White House.

As the Civil War grew more violent and brutal, Mary began losing her family. Three of Mary Ann's half-brothers and a half-sister's husband died during the war. Around the same time, William, one of her sons, died of fever in 1862. William's death inspired Mary to visit hospitals, bringing gifts of food, books and letters for the soldiers, and raised \$1,000 for a Christmas dinner. Besides helping the soldiers, Mary also helped slaves by raising money to build better housing.

A year after, Abraham was re-elected. Five days later, Abraham was dead and Mary became very distraught. Mary left the White House and moved to Chicago, to join her remaining sons, Robert and Thomas. On July 15, 1871, Thomas passed away. It was

extremely difficult for Mary to deal with another death. Her mental health deteriorated quickly. She had delusions, hallucinations and became paranoid. Robert became concerned and on May 20, 1875, a jury declared Mary mentally insane and committed her to Bellevue Nursing and Rest Home of Springfield, Illinois. After improving, Robert, her only living son, worked hard for her to be released. Finally, she was released to her sister Elizabeth, and later redeemed her sanity. Her health was slowly declining due to undiagnosed diabetes, spinal arthritis, and migraine headaches. On July 16, 1882, at the age of 63, Mary Ann Todd Lincoln passed away.

Mary was known as a compassionate mother of four. The death of her children and husband drove Mary to the brink. Mary Todd was devoted to her husband, family, and the world, leaving a moral behind: she lived up to her dreams, and continued on her journey until she finally found peace. [From Jean H. Baker, *Mary Todd Lincoln*; Randall Ruth Painter, *Mary Lincoln*; and Phillip B. Kunhardt, Phillip B. Kunhardt, III, and Peter W. Kunhardt, *Lincoln*.]

## **Abraham Lincoln and His Family**

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Abraham Lincoln is often thought of almost as a demigod by the American people. It is easy to forget that he was just a man like everyone else, with a family that influenced him. It is understood that a family plays a very major part in influencing who a young person grows up to become. Abe's family, especially his stepmother, influenced his learning and reading habits and gave him a hunger for knowledge that lasted all his life. They helped him to grow into the man that emancipated the slaves and led America through the Civil War.

“Family offers the environment in which a person learns in early age and at the same time family is the first source of information. That's why it is very important that that source to be trusted and realistic,” according to a Web site entitled, *Family Influence on the Educational Process*. A family is what young children learn and develop from. Studies show that children with higher quality of child care are better able to read, think, and interact with the world around them. Lincoln was strongly influenced by his stepmother, who encouraged him to read and learn. This may have helped him develop into the great thinker and leader that he was.

The first step to understanding Lincoln is to understand who were his parents. Many historians argue over who his biological father really was. There are actually about 16 different individuals who some authors have outlandishly claimed to be his real father, some of whom are quite famous. These include: John C. Calhoun, Henry Clay, and Patrick Henry. His real father was probably Thomas Lincoln who was a farmer and

carpenter. He did not have much schooling and never fully understood Abraham's desire to read and learn.

His birthmother was Nancy Hanks Lincoln. She and Thomas Lincoln had three children but one died. Nancy Lincoln was "loved and revered by all who knew her." She read the Bible to Abraham and his sister Sarah. Abraham loved her dearly and once said "all that I am or hope to become I owe to my angel mother." Unfortunately, she died on October 5, 1818, of milk sickness.

Thomas Lincoln soon married Sarah Bush. Sarah had three children of her own and the families soon moved in together. Sarah made the cabin into a real home for her children. Abraham and his new mother became very close. She once said that "Abe was the best boy I ever saw," and the two grew to love each other. She brought several books with her to the cabin and always encouraged Abe to read. She was able to persuade Thomas Lincoln to be more tolerant of Abe's reading habits, and always encouraged him to read. His stepmother was probably the strongest influence in Abe's life as a child.

His stepmother's influence showed as Abe went to school. As a child Abe was a very clever and studious boy. He read every book he could find from neighbors and libraries. His first two teachers taught in the "blab-school" method and Lincoln once said that "When I came of age I did not know much. . . I could read, write and cipher to the rule of three but that was all." Yet he always did very well and as one man who knew him said, "Abe beat all his masters and it was no use for him to try and learn any more from them."

In conclusion, a child's family has a big influence on the child as he or she grows. A family that encourages learning is more likely to produce children with a desire to

learn. Abraham Lincoln's family was like that, and he became a very learned man. His biggest influence within his family was his stepmother. She was the one who encouraged his learning and reading. Abe wrote one text to a teacher in school that exemplifies what his stepmother taught him: "Good boys who to their books apply, will all be great men by and by." [From *Comments on Abraham Lincoln's Paternity*, showcase.net <<http://showcase.netins.net/web/creative/Lincoln/father.htm>> (Oct. 10, 2006); Education in Moldova, *Family Influences on Educational Process*, <<http://www.educativ.info/edu/index.html>>; *Family Characteristics More Than Child Care Influences on Child Development*, Kansas City InfoZine <<http://www.infozine.com/news/stories/op/storiesView/sid/18149/>> (Oct.15, 2006); Rexford Newcomb, *In the Lincoln Country*; R. J. Norton, *Abraham Lincoln's Parents*, <<http://home.att.net/~rjnorton/Lincoln81.html>> (Oct. 12, 2006); and Alonzo Rothschild, *Lincoln, Master of Men*.]

## **Abraham Lincoln's Family**

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Abraham Lincoln lived a great life. He was a wonderful husband to Mary, his wife, and a loving father to his four boys, Robert, Edward, William, and Thomas. Mary was a great mother to them all, trying to bring them up the best that she could. Robert achieved many important things in his life as he grew up to be a governor. Edward, not living past four years of age, barely got to begin his life but was loved very much in the short time he was alive. William, who died at age eleven, was quite the prankster and yet mature for his age. Thomas, following in William's footsteps with pranks, was also more interested in his father, who was never annoyed by his pranks and capers. But he too did not get to live a long life, dying at age eighteen. Though only one of their sons lived to see adulthood, the Lincolns were a loving, caring family.

Mary Ann Todd, later to marry Lincoln, was born on December 13, 1818. Mary received more education than most women at that time. With her wealth and family background her decisions about marriage were surprisingly unselfish. She said, "I would rather marry a poor man than to marry all the houses of gold." When she married Abraham, some of Mary's family did not agree with her choice. Before moving to the White House, where there were maids to help with the children, Mary did most of the work. She tended to the children's needs, mended their clothes, helped them with their schoolwork, and watched their behavior. Most importantly, she tried to instruct them on how to be gentlemen. Abe wrote to Mary once when he was away on business, "I

thought you hindered me some in attending to business, but now, having nothing it has grown exceedingly tasteless to me.”

Robert Todd Lincoln was the oldest child of Mary and Abraham. He was born August 1, 1843. He was named after Mary’s father. Robert was stocky and not lean and long-boned like his father. Robert was shy and reticent. He was not as outgoing as the rest of the family. Robert was very successful. He entered Harvard in 1860 and graduated in 1864. He became a well-known lawyer and businessman. He also played a great role in government, serving as Secretary of War and was later appointed Minister to Great Britain. Robert was the only son of the Lincolns to live a full life and reach adulthood. He died at age 82, at this summer home in Vermont, on July 26, 1926.

The second child Mary and Abraham had was Edward Baker Lincoln. Edward was born on March 10, 1846. He was named after a friend and political ally of Abraham’s. After suffering from a long illness, he died, only being three years and ten months old. Little is known about Edward since he died so young. Mary wrote of one occasion when Robert brought home a kitten “when Eddie spied, his tenderness broke forth, he was a delighted little creature over it. . .” As Abe said his goodbyes and was leaving Springfield for the White House, he thought of Eddie. “Here I have lived a quarter of a century and have passed from a young to an old man. Here my children have been born and one is buried.” This summed up what Springfield meant to him.

William “Willie” Wallace Lincoln was the third child born to Mary and Abraham Lincoln. He was born on December 21, 1850, in Springfield. William was named for his uncle, William Wallace. William was a cheerful and amiable child. He was mature for his age. William was popular with his playmates. His mother described Willie as “a very

beautiful boy, with a most spiritual expression of face.” But this does not mean that he was not ready to join his younger brother Tad in pranks and mischief whenever opportunities presented themselves. William did not live long. He died at age 11 in the White House on February 20, 1862. His death was very tragic and drew a dark shadow over the remaining years his father served as president.

The fourth child Mary and Abraham had was their last. His name was Thomas Lincoln. He was named after Abraham’s father. Thomas’s nickname was “Tadpole” because when he was an infant his head seemed larger than usual. The name was abbreviated to “Tad” and was his nickname for life. Thomas was almost constantly near his father and always clinging to his side. He overflowed with joy in his young life. Thomas was inventive in mischief. He was rather famous for his pranks that he would often carry out with the help of William, his older brother. Thomas died at age 18 on July 15, 1871, almost six years after the assassination of his father. It was a great loss to his mother who depended on him for love and understanding after Abraham’s death.

Abraham Lincoln was born on February 12, 1809. His parents were Thomas and Nancy Hanks Lincoln. His mother died when he was nine. His father remarried to Sarah Bush Johnston Lincoln. At age 22 Lincoln left home to try and find his own way of life. He ran for state legislature and lost the first time but was successful the second time. Then he began to study law and moved to Springfield. While in Springfield he met Mary Todd who he later married in 1842. Over the course of ten years they had four children, all boys. In addition to his illustrious political career, Abraham was a loving father and husband. Mrs. Lincoln wrote of him, “Mr. Lincoln was the kindest man and most loving husband and father in the world.” [From Family Tree Maker: Verizon Online,

“Ancestors of Abraham Lincoln” (Oct. 11, 2006); Lincoln Home: Verizon Online, “The Lincoln Family” (Oct. 11, 2006); Paul M. Angle, “The Lincoln Reader;” and Editors of Country Beautiful Magazine, “Lincoln: His Words and His Worlds”.]

## **The Influence of Lincoln's Mothers**

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A child's identity at an early age is soon influenced by the parent's actions, beliefs and character. The first and most influential women in Abraham Lincoln's life were his birthmother, Nancy, and his beloved stepmother, Sarah. Twenty-eight-year old Thomas Lincoln and the daughter of Lucy (or "Lucey" as it is spelled in the old records) Hanks, Nancy Hanks were married. On February 12, 1809, Nancy gave birth to Abraham Lincoln. After she died in 1818, Thomas married Sarah Bush Johnston. Abraham knew Nancy for only nine years. Abraham started a new life and spent the rest of his childhood in Indiana with his new loving mother.

Abraham did not care to talk about his birthmother Nancy. This was due to the fact that Nancy was said to be an illegitimate child. Nancy's mother had no wedding certificate and this left room for speculation about Lincoln's grandmother. In one legal case the matter of his mother was relevant to Abraham. The case involved the questioning of hereditary traits and Abraham observed that illegitimate children were "oftentimes sturdier and brighter than those born in lawful wedlock." To prove his point he mentioned his mother Nancy in court when he said she was "the illegitimate daughter of Lucy Hanks and a well-bred Virginia farmer or planter." From "this broad-minded, unknown Virginian" Abraham believed he inherited the persona that distinguished him from the other members of his family: ambition, mental alertness, and the power of analysis.

Few of Abraham's earliest memories concerned his mother. Photography was far in the future and no one bothered to draw a likeness of Nancy Hanks Lincoln. She is said to have been brilliant, for she was one of the very few literate frontier women. Although she was considered brilliant, she lacked writing skill and had to sign legal documents with an "X." On rare occasions in Abraham's older life, he referred to her as his "angel mother," due to her loving affection. As one of Abraham's dear friends, Herndon reports Abraham saying "God bless my mother; all that I am or ever hope to be I owe to her." According to historian David Herbert Donald, it was an honor not so much to her maternal care as to the genes that she purportedly supplied from his unnamed grandfather. Abraham was nine when his birthmother Nancy died. Her death left a fog of depression on the Lincoln household.

A year after Nancy's death, Thomas Lincoln realized that he and his family could not go on any longer alone. Thomas headed back to Kentucky to see Sarah Bush Johnston, who was the widow of the Hardin County jailer and mother of three small children. He needed a wife; she needed a husband; so they made a quick businesslike arrangement for him to pay her debts and her to pack up her belongings and move to Indiana with him. The arrival of Sarah Lincoln marked a turning point in Abraham Lincoln's life. Sarah's children Elizabeth, John and Matilda, who ranged from thirteen to eight years old, brought life and excitement into the depressed Lincoln household. Among the spinning wheel, the walnut bureau, and spoons, the greatest thing she brought was love. Sarah soon set to work on the unhygienic house and family. "She soaped—rubbed and washed the children clean," Dennis Hanks remembered, "so that they look[ed] pretty neat—well and clean."

The fusing of two separate families seemed near impossible, but was rendered possible by Sarah Lincoln. Without jealousy or mayhem, she formed one solid and clean household. She treated Thomas's children as if she were their very own birthmother. She grew especially fond of Abraham. "Abe never gave me a cross word or look and never refused in fact, or even in appearance, to do anything I requested him," she remembered. "I never gave him a cross word in all my life. . . His mind and mine—what little I had [—] seemed to move together—move in the same channel." Many years later, when Sarah was attempting to compare her son and her stepson, she told an interviewer: "Both were good boys, but I must say—both now being dead that Abe was the best boy I saw or ever expect to see." Abraham loved his new mother and never spoke of her except in the most affectionate terms. The years of Sarah Bush Lincoln's arrival in Indiana were happy ones for young Abraham. Afterward, when Abraham spoke of this time, it was as "a joyous, happy boyhood," which he described "with mirth and glee," and in his recollections "there was nothing sad nor pinched, and nothing of want."

Both Nancy and Sarah were colossal influences on young Abraham. The love of both of his mothers helped shape his career and life choices. Abraham credited Nancy with grand traits such as ambition, mental alertness, and the power of analysis. These traits became crucial during his time as the President of the United States. The love provided by his stepmother Sarah during a time of loss and the constant motivation to excel in school and all other aspects of life prepared Abraham to make wise choices as well as make productive use of his time. At the time that Abraham became president he told of the encouragement Sarah gave him as a boy. "She had been his best friend in this world," a relative reported him as saying "and . . . no man could love a mother more than

he loved her.” [From Charles Coleman, *Abraham Lincoln and Coles Country, Illinois*; David Donald, *Lincoln*; Emanuel Hertz, ed., *The Hidden Lincoln: From the Letters and Papers of William H. Herndon*; and Allen Rice, *Reminiscences of Abraham Lincoln by Distinguished Men of His Time*.]

## **Abraham Lincoln's Family**

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Abraham Lincoln is a very distinguished figure in American history. Every school child learns of him and how he freed the slaves and also of his assassination on April 14, 1865. However, in all his political stardom, Abe's personal life is somewhat shadowed. Not many people know of his ancestry or the family that he and his wife Mary Todd created. There is much more to be learned about this fascinating figure just by studying the people who supported him and surrounded him throughout his life.

Lincoln himself had some idea of his heritage but it was vague. He never wrote about his mother's side and he only knew about two generations before his father. "My grandfather went from Rockingham country in Virginia to Kentucky, in about 1782; and, two years afterwards, was assassinated by the Indians," Lincoln wrote in a letter to another relative. "We have a vague tradition, that my great-grandfather went from Pennsylvania to Virginia; and that he was a Quaker," he wrote in the same letter. This was all that Lincoln himself had been told about his heritage.

Historians have since determined that Lincoln was in fact correct about his Quaker ancestry, but his earlier ancestors were New England Puritans. The first ancestor to come to America was Samuel Lincoln, who came before 1640 as part of the great Puritan Migration of the 1630s. Nothing is known about his mother's side.

Abe's parents were Thomas Lincoln and Nancy Hanks. They were married on June 12, 1806. Following the marriage, they moved to a farm in Hardin County, Kentucky, and in 1807, birthed a daughter, Sarah. In 1809, Abe was born in a log cabin

that his father had built. On October 5, 1818, Abe's mother, Nancy, died of a sickness caused by drinking poisoned milk. Young Abe recalled helping to carve the pegs for the coffin. Thomas went on to remarry and die in 1851 at the age of 73. Abe was not close to him and did not attend the funeral. Abe eventually married Mary Ann Todd.

Mary Ann Todd was born December 13, 1818, in Kentucky. She was the daughter of Eliza Parker and Robert Smith Todd and she was one of seven children. In 1839 she moved to Springfield and became very popular in society. Prior to dating Abe, she dated the man who would come to be his archrival, Stephen A. Douglas. She and Abe were married on November 4, 1842, and settled in to begin a family.

On August 1, 1843, a son was born to Mary and Abe. They named him Robert Todd after Mary's father. He went to a private school in his younger years and eventually attended Harvard Law School for a short time. Following his father's death, he took courses at the University of Chicago (although not the school of that name today) and eventually became a lawyer. He married in 1868 and the couple had three children. He continued to live happily until his death in 1926 at the age of 82.

The Lincoln's second child, Edward Baker Lincoln, was born on March 10, 1846. He was named for Edward Baker a friend of Abraham's. Eddie was said to be an affectionate and tenderhearted little boy. After a short illness, Eddie died on February 1, 1850. He was not yet 4 years old.

On December 21, 1850, the Lincoln's third son, William Wallace was born. William was nicknamed "Willie" for short. He was named for Dr. William Wallace, the husband of Frances Todd, a sister of Mary Todd. Willie loved learning, wrote poetry, excelled in math, and was said to be bright and sweet natured. Many believed that

William was actually Abraham's favorite child. The two were quite close and it has been said that they could often be seen walking together holding hands. On February 20, 1862, at just 11 years old, Willie died in the White House. Both parents painfully mourned the death. Mary never totally recovered from the loss of her son.

On April 4, 1853, the Lincoln's fourth and final child was born. He was named Thomas Lincoln after Abraham's father. Thomas received the nickname "Tad" because, as a baby, he looked like a tadpole. As a boy Tad was a high-spirited, often difficult, undisciplined prankster. At age 12, Tad was nearly illiterate even though he had tutors while in the White House. He later attended school in Chicago and Europe. After his father was assassinated Tad was especially close to his mother. They lived and traveled in Europe together and Tad lovingly looked after his mother. They returned to the United States after a 2 ½ year absence. Shortly after arriving in Chicago in 1871, Tad became desperately ill. He died on July 15, 1871. Tad was 18 years old. Once again, Mary was overcome with grief with the loss of yet another child.

It is imperative to realize that Lincoln was not only a president but also a son, husband, and father. One can learn more about him just by studying his family life. No matter the circumstances, one statement remains true: Lincoln would have never been the man he was without the love and support of his family. [From Abraham Lincoln Research Site, "Abraham Lincoln's Parents,"

<<http://home.att.net/~rjnorton/Lincoln81.html>> (Oct. 14, 2006); Abraham Lincoln Research Site, "Mary Todd Lincoln," <<http://home.att.net/~rjnorton/Lincoln76.html>> (Oct. 14, 2006); Abraham Lincoln Research Site, "Robert Todd Lincoln,"

<<http://home.att.net/~rjnorton/Lincoln66.html>> (Oct. 15, 2006); MSN Encarta, "Abraham

Lincoln,” <[http://Encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia\\_761577113/Lincoln\\_Abraham.html](http://Encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761577113/Lincoln_Abraham.html)> (Oct. 13, 2006); Mark E. Neely, Jr., *The Abraham Lincoln Encyclopedia*; Springfield Illinois, “Mary Todd Lincoln And The Children,” <<http://www.topologies.net/mary-lincoln.htm>> (Oct. 15, 2006); and Ida M. Tarbell, *Abraham Lincoln And His Ancestors*.]

## **Abraham Lincoln's Family was Affected when He Chose Government as a Profession**

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Abraham Lincoln has always been a well-known figure in history. Most know him as the sixteenth President of the United States of America; others knew him as Dad, son, brother or just Abe. Have you ever wondered what it would be like to be the son, wife, mother or father to such a famous figure in history?

Abraham Lincoln's family had always meant a great deal to him. You might find the family in the living room reading the paper, eating together at the dinner table, or deliberating with one another on current events. Having each other there when one of them needed help was important to all of them.

When Lincoln ran for the presidency, his family was greatly affected. He was away from home giving speeches continually and traveling to various states, even as far away as Kentucky. His family members tried to be by his side as often as they could. At a young age, Abraham became interested in politics, and, after Lincoln and Mary Todd married, she began taking an interest in politics, as well. Lincoln and Mary's three sons, Robert, William and Thomas, also took great interest in politics at a young age. Even though William died at the age of eleven, he had already taken an interest in government. Lincoln enjoyed the feeling that at least one of his children would follow in his footsteps. His son, Robert served as Secretary of War under presidents Garfield and Arthur, and some time later served under Benjamin Harrison, who appointed him minister to Great Britain. Lincoln's three sons grew up watching their father debate others on current

topics. All of his life, Robert looked to his father for advice and idolized him for what he did to distinguish his government standing.

After Abraham Lincoln became the sixteenth President of the United States, the family was overjoyed and proud of their father for having accomplished something so great that only fifteen other people before him had the chance to experience. As you can imagine, Lincoln and his family were under extreme pressure early in his presidency. Lincoln became president at a very difficult time in United States history, especially having to deal with the Civil War. This affected not only his immediate family, but also the families living in the North and South.

Two years into Lincoln's Presidency, he and his family were faced with another adversity, when William became very sick and was not expected to live. Sadly, William died on February 20, 1862, in the White House at the tender age of eleven. William's death devastated the Lincoln family, and cast a dark shadow over the remaining years of Lincoln's presidency, already made tragic by the Civil War.

After the devastating loss of their son, William, the Lincoln family thought nothing else could happen. The Lincoln family was looking forward to better days ahead. However, just three years later, on April 14, 1865, Lincoln and Mary Todd were together again attending a show at Ford's Theatre in Washington, D. C. when John Wilkes Booth shot Mr. Lincoln. This devastated Mary and her children, who had not only lost the person they had admired most, but lost a father and husband.

Mary, along with Robert remained by Abraham's bedside throughout the night. In fact, seeing his mother so devastated, Robert sent for her best friend, Mrs. Dixon, the wife of Connecticut senator Dixon, to console her. Hours later, Lincoln passed away.

Robert's and Mary's life would never be the same. [From David Donald, *Lincoln*; Edward, Robert, William, and Thomas Lincoln, <[www.nps.gov/archive/liho/family/family.htm](http://www.nps.gov/archive/liho/family/family.htm)> (Sept. 6, 2006); Mark Neely, Jr., *Abraham Lincoln*; Carl Sandburg, *Abraham Lincoln*; and Ida Tarbell, *Abraham Lincoln and His Ancestors*.]